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A P O L O G Y

F O R T H E

Organs and Prayers

Used in the Church of *England*, in Answer to some Fanatical Reflections upon *BELLS* and *CRUTCHES* in a Letter from a Gentleman in the City to his Friend.

I M P R I M A T U R.

Nov. 23. 1692.

GUIL. LANCASTER.

SIR, when you last entertained me with your good Company, you were extremely obliging, especially in asserting the Doctrines of the Church of *England* to be pure and Apostolick: and as I endeavoured to confirm you in that good Opinion, I was at the same time as industriously concerned, to abate your prejudice against some of her Ceremonies: and as I have justly admired your even Temper, moderate Spirit and sound Judgment, therefore cannot but think you will pardon my freedom if for once I commit a Trespass upon your Patience, and endeavour to confute your Error, and remove your indigested Notions. In our late Conference you appeared much for Union; but you were so squeatic and croplick, that you needed to consult a Physician to clear your Stomach from Phlegm and Choler: I remember you seemed much disturbed at our *Bells* and *Crutches*, which if our Church would shake off, we should find you in a better disposition to imbrace her Communion. Sir, if you cannot digest that you call popish and profane noise of Bells in our Steeples, (since you can not but know they were appointed for no other end but the Calling the People together to worship God) you would do well to think of some other Instruments: I confess I apprehend it more decent than winding the Horn, blowing the Trumpet, or beating the Drum. Sir, my kindness for your Personal Virtues is exceeding great, and I would gladly employ my utmost thoughts in contributing towards the satisfying your reasonable Scruples, had I a Key to unlock your *dark Metaphors*: and whereas you desire us to shake off our *Bells* and lay aside our *Crutches*, I hope you will first prove we wear them. As for the word *Shake*, it is more proper to be used to *Quakers*; but shaking of Bells I judge most applicable to Morris-Dancers: and such you represent us to be by your blind and obscure Sayings. But before I proceed to discourse further upon this Topick, I must unfold your meaning; The Organs in our Churches which so highly offend your scrupulous Consciences, and bugbear you out of our Communion, sufficiently incite us to pity your Understandings, and to prevail with you to lay aside Pride, Prejudice, and a peevish Spirit. Can you upon Scripture Grounds warrant your departure from us? and why are you thus transported with indignation against our Church-Discipline, when you may be justly censured amongst those furious Zealots, who, as *St. Paul* bears Record, had a Zeal, but not according to Knowledge, and since from Holy Scripture we have but this general Rule for the Discipline of the Church: That *all things be done decently and in order*, you ought to prove her injunctions incongruous to the one, or the other; or to assign some solid Reasons for such your unchristian Clamors: but if the Wisdom and Experience of our Spiritual Pastors have thought fit to praise God with the Organ, (an Instrument proper to raise our dull Affections, and, if possible, to charm us into the deepest contemplations of Love and Adoration of that incomprehensible Being which was, and is, and shall be for ever: 'Tis acknowledged these are but faint and imperfect Emblems of that perpetual Harmony we shall ere long be heartily ingaged in, when Mortals must put on Immortality. But you will object, it is the Heart and not the Voice

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that renders this service acceptable to God: as the Heart of a Good man is filled with Secret Love, and warm'd with Internal Devotion; so the Voice at that instant is an outward manifestation of our hearty and exalted Affections to the Supreme Goodness: and that Organical Sound, mingling with the Voice, becomes a further Instrument of praise by helping our bodily Infirmities, cheering our Spirits, quickning our Affections to a rejoicing in future Heavenly Hope. As for those Excellent *Forms of Prayer*, you term *Crutches*, composed by those Holy men, who sealed them with their Blood, (and thereby gave ample testimony they were illuminated by the Spirit of God) the Church hath thought fit to retain at this day: and the Excellency and Usefulness of those *Prayers* you have recommended to you by the learned Doctor *Beveridge*: and *God be praised*, such is the Christian Modesty and profound Humility of the Pious part of our Church, that they are not ashamed to own themselves Spiritually lame, blind, and naked; attended with a numerous train of bodily Imperfections, *crippled* in their Memories, and darkend in their Intellects, and *therefore* they come not with *God I thank thee* but, *God be merciful to me*. Daily experience hath convinc'd them, how often they are nonplust in the presence of Earthly Majesty; and from thence they are fully instructed in their duty to God, to offer up such prayers as contain a Catalogue of their wants, and express an humble sense of the vast distance and disproportion betwixt God and his Creatures: they endeavour to avoid indecent and saucy Expressions, licentious Rambles, vain Repetitions, and bold and familiar Talk with Almighty God, which must either lessen Attention, or at least great levity in the Hearer. Hence it is such numbers of loose People flock to Doctor *Burges's* Meeting, declaring they find more diversion in his Comical Discourse, then in a Play; and although, I think, these people spend their time but ill, yet I can not but observe, were there not a *Merry Andrew*, there would be no *Spectators*: and although we allow he may be an Instrument of doing some good to the meaner Capacities; yet, as some, learned dissenting Divines have wisely observed by his indiscreet Behaviour, he doth as much harm: And if he were dismiss the Pulpit till he has learnt to behave himself more reverently in it; he could no longer serve the ends of Atheists and Papists, who so readily take advantage to ridicule the Reformation; and common Observation hath convinced me, that such whose pride and fancy have advanc'd them above the use of Forms, too often, in their *extempore* prayers, trump up such fullsome loose or impertinent babblings as are not allowable in sober Conversation. How then shall the Judicious be able to say *Amen* to their Prayers. When I pray by a Set Form, my great Duty is to get my Heart to assent to the Words. I am before fully satisfied they contain hearty Confessions, humble Petitions, and thankful Acknowledgments, and in words proper and significant, fitted even to the lowest capacity. And I have altogether as much reason to believe, the Spirit of God will be aiding my Infirmities in these plain and easie forms of Prayer, as in the most flourishing *extempore* Addresses. And has not our blessed Lord (the Wisdom of the Father Saviour, of the World) recommended to our choice and use, the most perfect and exact form of Prayer: for was it not said, writ, and enjoined our imitation, and yet so impiously ignorant, so fanatically conceited are many amongst us at this day, especially of the Independant and Baptist or plunging Party that should their Teachers repeat the *Lords Prayer*, they would immediately express their resentments in a frow and angry Aspect, ye, and perhaps reproach him as a formal lukewarm Fellow, a Shepherd unfit to instruct a knowing Congregation. As for the Liturgy and Collects of the Church of *England*, I see no just exceptions against them, and since forms of Prayer were constantly used by the Primitive Fathers, and were highly esteemed by our first Reformers from Popery, and are now retained in most of the reformed Churches in *Europe*. What reason then have we to despise a form of sound words framed by men who gave such convincing evidences to the World, by their Zeal for God's Glory, and their constant perseverance in the true Religion, that they were Strangers and Pilgrims upon Earth, and being abundantly influenc'd by the Holy Spirit: they went on their way rejoicing to Heaven, Praising and Glorifying God, who had accounted them worthy to be witnesses to the Truth of the Gospel, and in imitation of the Blessed *JESUS* the Author and Finisher of their Faith, they despised their Lives, embraced the Flames, and are undoubtedly placed at the Right-hand of God, possessing an inheritance incorruptable and undeliled.

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